



Chapter Five

Vedic Philosophy

Three Aspects of the Absolute

Krsna and the Supreme Personality of Godhead are identical. Therefore Lord Krsna is referred to as Bhagavan throughout the Gita. Bhagavan is the ultimate in the Absolute Truth. Absolute Truth is realized in three phases of understanding, namely Brahman, or the impersonal all-pervasive spirit; Paramatma, or the localized aspect of the Supreme within the heart of all living entities; and Bhagavan, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krsna. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.11) this conception of the Absolute Truth is explained thus:

"The Absolute Truth is realized in three phases of understanding by the knower of the Absolute Truth, and all of them are identical. Such phases of the Absolute Truth are expressed as Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan."

These three divine aspects can be explained by the example of the sun, which also has three different aspects, namely the sunshine, the sun's surface and the sun planet itself. One who studies the sunshine only is the preliminary student. One who understands the sun's surface is further advanced. And one who can enter into the sun planet is the highest. Ordinary students who are satisfied by simply understanding the sunshine -- its universal pervasiveness and the glaring effulgence of its impersonal nature -- may be compared to those who can realize only the Brahman feature of the Absolute Truth. The student who has advanced still further can know the sun disc, which is compared to knowledge of the Paramatma feature of the Absolute Truth. And the student who can enter into the heart of the sun planet is compared to those who realize the personal features of the Supreme Absolute Truth.

Therefore, the bhaktas, or the transcendentalists who have realized the Bhagavan feature of the Absolute Truth, are the topmost transcendentalists, although all students who are engaged in the study of the Absolute Truth are engaged in the same subject matter. The sunshine, the sun disc and the inner affairs of the sun planet cannot be separated from one another, and yet the students of the three different phases are not in the same category. (Bhagavad-gita 2.2 purport)

The Complete Whole, or the Supreme Absolute Truth, is the complete Personality of Godhead. Realization of impersonal Brahman or of Paramatma, the Supersoul, is incomplete realization of the Absolute Complete. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is sac-cid-ananda-vigraha [Bs. 5.1]. Realization of impersonal Brahman is realization of His sat feature,



or His aspect of eternity, and Paramatma realization is realization of His sat and cit features, His aspects of eternity and knowledge. But realization of the Personality of Godhead is realization of all the transcendental features -- sat, cit and ananda, bliss.

When one realizes the Supreme Person, he realizes these aspects of the Absolute Truth in their completeness. Vigraha means "form." Thus the Complete Whole is not formless. If He were formless, or if He were less than His creation in any other way, He could not be complete. The Complete Whole must contain everything both within and beyond our experience; otherwise He cannot be complete. (Sri Isopanisad, invocation, p.2)

Sanatana-dharma

Sanatana-dharma does not refer to any sectarian process of religion. It is the eternal function of the eternal living entities in relationship with the eternal Supreme Lord. Sanatana-dharma refers, as stated previously, to the eternal occupation of the living entity. Sripada Ramanujacarya has explained the word sanatana as "that which has neither beginning nor end," so when we speak of sanatana-dharma, we must take it for granted on the authority of Sripada Ramanujacarya that it has neither beginning nor end.

The English world religion is a little different from sanatana-dharma. Religion conveys the idea of faith, and faith may change. One may have faith in a particular process, and he may change this faith and adopt another, but sanatana-dharma refers to that activity which cannot be changed. For instance, liquidity cannot be taken from water, nor can heat be taken from fire. Similarly, the eternal function of the eternal living entity cannot be taken from the living entity.

Sanatana-dharma is eternally integral with the living entity. When we speak of sanatana-dharma, therefore, we must take it for granted on the authority of Sripada Ramanujacarya that it has neither beginning nor end. That which has neither end nor beginning must not be sectarian, for it cannot be limited by any boundaries. Those belonging to some sectarian faith will wrongly consider that sanatana-dharma is also sectarian, but if we go deeply into the matter and consider it in the light of modern science, it is possible for us to see that sanatana-dharma is the business of all the people of the world -- nay, of all the living entities of the universe.

Non-sanatana religious faith may have some beginning in the annals of human history, but there is no beginning to the history of sanatana-dharma, because it remains eternally with the living entities. Insofar as the living entities are concerned, the authoritative sastras state that the living entity has neither birth nor death. In the Gita it is stated that the living entity is never born and he never dies. He is eternal and indestructible, and he continues to live after the destruction of his temporary material body.



In reference to the concept of sanatana-dharma, we must try to understand the concept of religion from the Sanskrit root meaning of the word. Dharma refers to that which is constantly existing with a particular object. We conclude that there is heat and light along with the fire; without heat and light, there is no meaning to the word fire. Similarly, we must discover the essential part of the living being, that part which is his constant companion. That constant companion is his eternal quality, and that eternal quality is his eternal religion (Bhagavad-gita p.18-19)

Karmis, Jnanis, Yogis and Bhaktas

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said: "Because a devotee of Lord Krsna is desireless, he is peaceful. Fruitive workers desire material enjoyment, jnanis desire liberation, and yogis desire material opulence; therefore they are all lusty and cannot be peaceful."

PURPORT

The devotee of Lord Krsna has no desire other than serving Krsna. Even so-called liberated people are full of desires. Fruitive actors desire better living accommodations, and jnanis want to be one with the Supreme. Yogis desire material opulence, yogic perfections and magic. All of these nondevotees are lusty (kami). Because they desire something, they cannot have peace.

The peace formula is given by Krsna in the Bhagavad-gita (5.29):

bhoktaram yajna-tapasam sarva-loka-mahesvaram
suhrdam sarva-bhutanam jnatva mam santim rcchati

One who simply understands that throughout the entire universe Krsna is the supreme enjoyer and beneficiary of all kinds of sacrifices, penances and austerities, which should be performed only to attain His devotional service, that Krsna is the Supreme Being and thus the proprietor of all the material worlds, and that Krsna is the only friend who can actually do good to all living entities (suhrdam sarva-bhutanam) -- one who understands these three principles about Krsna immediately becomes desireless (niskama) and therefore peaceful.

A krsna-bhakta knows that his friend and protector in all respects is Krsna, who is able to do anything for His devotee. Krsna says, kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati: "O son of Kunti, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes." Since Krsna gives this assurance, the devotee lives in Krsna and has no desire for personal benefit. The background for the devotee is the all-good Himself. Why should the devotee aspire for something good for himself? His only business is to please the Supreme by rendering as much service as possible.

A krsna-bhakta has no desire for his own personal benefit. He is completely protected by the Supreme. Avasya raksibe krsna visvasa palana. Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that he is



desireless because Krsna will give him protection in all circumstances. It is not that he expects any assistance from Krsna; he simply depends on Krsna just as a child depends on his parents. The child does not know how to expect service from his parents, but he is always protected nevertheless. This is called *niskama* (desirelessness).

Although *karmis*, *jnanis* and *yogis* fulfill their desires by performing various activities, they are never satisfied. A *karmi* may work very hard to acquire a million dollars, but as soon as he gets a million dollars he desires another million. For the *karmis*, there is no end of desire. The more the *karmi* gets, the more he desires. The *jnanis* cannot be desireless because their intelligence is unsound. They want to merge into the Brahman effulgence, but even though they may be raised to that platform, they cannot be satisfied there.

There are many *jnanis* or *sannyasis* who, after taking *sannyasa* and giving up the world as false, return to the world to engage in politics or philanthropy or to open schools and hospitals. This means that they could not attain the real Brahman (*brahma satyam*). They have to come down to the material platform to engage in philanthropic activity. Thus they again cultivate desires, and when these desires are exhausted, they desire something different. Therefore the *jnani* cannot be *niskama*, desireless.

Nor can the *yogis* be desireless, for they desire yogic perfections in order to exhibit some magical feats and gain popularity. People gather around these *yogis*, and the *yogis* desire more and more adulation. Because they misuse their mystic power, they fall down again to the material platform. It is not possible for them to become *niskama*, desireless.

The conclusion is that only the devotees, who are simply satisfied in serving the Lord, can actually become desireless. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu says here, *krsna-bhakta niskama*. Since the *krsna-bhakta*, the devotee of Krsna, is satisfied with Krsna, there is no possibility of fall down. (Cc.Madhya 19.149)

Karma

Western science and philosophy commonly hold that the law of casualty governs all action and events in the universe, that there can be no actions or events without the corresponding causes, at least in the material platform. The Vedic literature calls this law of cause and effect the law of *karma*.

From time immemorial, the *jiva* has been acting in the material world and enjoying or suffering the reactions of his actions. His actions bring about his transmigration from one material body to another. In other words, the *jiva* takes off and puts on bodies just as one takes off old and useless garments and puts on new ones. As the *jiva* transmigrates, he suffers or enjoys the results of his past activities (*karma*).



In one sense, all karma is bondage. Even pious activities, or ' good karma' , bind a person to the wheel of transmigration. One has to be free from all karma if he is to transcend samsara, repeated birth and death. The jiva creates his own karma out of his particular desires to enjoy the world in different ways. Thus, neither Bhagavan nor material nature is responsible for the karma of the jiva, he makes his own destiny.

According to the the jiva' s activities (and under the supervision of the Supreme), material nature simply awards the jiva his next body to carry out his desires. Freedom from that chain of karma comes through knowledge. ' As the blazing fire turns firewood to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge burn to ashes all reactions (sarva karmani) to material activities.' This ' fire of knowledge' refers to the jiva' s awareness of his constitutional position as the eternal servant of the Supreme. When one surrenders to Bhagavan, he transcends all past, present, and future karma.

The jiva cannot become free from karma merely from refraining from action. The Vedas portray the soul as eternally and irrevocably active. ' It is indeed impossible for an embodied being to give up all activities. Therefore, it is said that he who renounces the truth of fruits of action (karma-phala-tyagi) is he who has truly renounced.' In other words, one has to learn the art of working without accruing karma.

In Bhagavad-gita, Bhagavan Sri Krishna explains this art of karma-yoga in detail. Briefly, one who performs his activities as a sacrifice to the Supreme Bhagavan, avoids karma, bondage within the material world. Such refined, sacrificial activity is called akarma, that is, action without reaction. The Narada-Pancaratra explains that the art of karma-yoga is hrsikena-hrsikesa-sevanam: ' serving the Lord of the senses with one' s ~~sens~~.' It is the function of the guru to teach his students this elusive art of karma, action without reaction. Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami, Readings in Vedic Literature, pp. 28,29

Jiva, the Spirit Soul

mamaivamso jiva-loke
jiva-bhutah sanatanah
manah-sasthanindriyani
prakrti-sthani karsati

The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.

In this verse the identity of the living being is clearly given. The living entity is the fragmental part and parcel of the Supreme Lord -- eternally. It is not that he assumes individuality in his conditional life and in his liberated state becomes one with the Supreme Lord. He is eternally fragmented. It is clearly said, sanatanah.



According to the Vedic version, the Supreme Lord manifests and expands Himself in innumerable expansions, of which the primary expansions are called visnu-tattva and the secondary expansions are called the living entities. In other words, the visnu-tattva is the personal expansion, and the living entities are the separated expansions. By His personal expansion, He is manifested in various forms like Lord Rama, Nrsimhadeva, Visnumurti and all the predominating Deities in the Vaikuntha planets.

The separated expansions, the living entities, are eternally servitors. The personal expansions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the individual identities of the Godhead, are always present. Similarly, the separated expansions of living entities have their identities. As fragmental parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, the living entities also have fragmental portions of His qualities, of which independence is one. Every living entity, as an individual soul, has his personal individuality and a minute form of independence.

By misuse of that independence one becomes a conditioned soul, and by proper use of independence he is always liberated. In either case, he is qualitatively eternal, as the Supreme Lord is. In his liberated state he is freed from this material condition, and he is under the engagement of transcendental service unto the Lord; in his conditioned life he is dominated by the material modes of nature, and he forgets the transcendental loving service of the Lord. As a result, he has to struggle very hard to maintain his existence in the material world.

The living entities, not only human beings and the cats and dogs, but even the greater controllers of the material world -- Brahma, Lord Siva and even Visnu -- are all parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord. They are all eternal, not temporary manifestations. The word karsati ("struggling" or "grappling hard") is very significant. The conditioned soul is bound up, as though shackled by iron chains. He is bound up by the false ego, and the mind is the chief agent which is driving him in this material existence. When the mind is in the mode of goodness, his activities are good; when the mind is in the mode of passion, his activities are troublesome; and when the mind is in the mode of ignorance, he travels in the lower species of life.

It is clear, however, in this verse, that the conditioned soul is covered by the material body, with the mind and the senses, and when he is liberated this material covering perishes, but his spiritual body manifests itself in its individual capacity. The following information is there in the Madhyandinayana-sruti that when a living entity gives up this material embodiment and enters into the spiritual world, he revives his spiritual body, and in his spiritual body he can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face. He can hear and speak to Him face to face, and he can understand the Supreme Personality as He is. From smṛti also it is understood, *vasanti yatra puruṣa sarve vaikuntha-murtayah*: in the spiritual planets everyone lives in bodies featured like the Supreme Personality of Godhead's. As far as bodily construction is concerned, there is no difference between the part-and-parcel living entities and the expansions of visnu-murti. In other words, at liberation the living entity gets a spiritual body by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.



The words mamaivamsah ("fragmental parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord") are also very significant. The fragmental portion of the Supreme Lord is not like some material broken part. We have already understood in the Second Chapter that the spirit cannot be cut into pieces. This fragment is not materially conceived. It is not like matter, which can be cut into pieces and joined together again. That conception is not applicable here, because the Sanskrit word sanatana ("eternal") is used. The fragmental portion is eternal.

It is also stated in the beginning of the Second Chapter that in each and every individual body the fragmental portion of the Supreme Lord is present (dehino ' smin yatha dehe). That fragmental portion, when liberated from the bodily entanglement, revives its original spiritual body in the spiritual sky in a spiritual planet and enjoys association with the Supreme Lord. It is, however, understood here that the living entity, being the fragmental part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, is qualitatively one with the Lord, just as the parts and parcels of gold are also gold. (Bhagavad gita 15.7)

Maya

Material illusion is called maya. Maya means ' unreality, deception, forgetfulness' ' that which is not.' Under the influence of maya, a man thinks that he can be happy within the temporary material world. As the deluding energy of the Supreme, maya acts not independently but under His direction. It is by illusion (maya) the jiva is confined. One should know that Nature is illusion (maya) and that the Mighty Lord is the illusion maker.'

Maya' s power is such that although a man may be suffering manifold miseries, he will think himself happy. ' The cause of man' s suffering and impotence is maya, under whose influence he forgets his divine nature.' When the jiva identifies with the body, he develops thousands of desires and then attempts to fulfill them. It is the nature of the material world that the more the jiva tries to exploit the material situation, the more he is bound by maya' s complexities. Acting under the influence of maya, the jiva subjects himself to the law of karma, (cause and effect).

As for the origin of maya, Bhagavan Krishna states, ' This divine energy of Mine (maya), consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome.' The Vedas further enjoin: ' Although maya (illusion) is false or temporary, the background of maya is the Supreme magician, the Personality of Godhead, who is Mahesvara, the supreme controller.'

In sum, maya is a delusion, a trick, a mirage that bewilders a person into thinking that eternality and happiness abide in the activities of the material world (which in actuality is temporary and miserable.) Even a highly educated or intelligent man may be under the spell of maya; Bhagavad-gita designates such a person as mayayapahrta-jnana, ' one whose knowledge is stolen by maya.' Vedic literature purports to free all beings from the clutches of maya. To be delivered from this illusion which has somehow come to dominate the race of man is the end of all endeavour.'



According to Bhagavad-gita it is very difficult for the jiva to break free from the bondage of maya: ' This divine energy of Me, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me, can easily cross beyond it.' (Satsvarupa dasa Gosvami, Readings in Vedic Literature, pp. 28,29)

Three Modes of Material Nature

The three modes of material nature are goodness (sattvam), passion (rajas), and ignorance (tamas). They are the controlling forces which govern all objects and activities within the material world.

Persons in the mode of ignorance are controlled by sleep, madness, intoxication, laziness, filth, etc. Those on passion are controlled by intense desire and longings, specially symbolized by sex desire. Those in goodness are symptomized by happiness, peacefulness, and illumination. Goodness is the stepping stone to spiritual life. To the extent that devotional activities are material, they are in the mode of goodness.

The transcendental position is one of pure goodness, where one is no longer influenced by the modes of material nature. Krishna says that those who surrender to Him can easily cross over the modes of nature. Otherwise, everyone is fully under the control of these modes even though they think themselves free.

Five Kinds of Liberation

A pure devotee does not accept any kind of liberation -- salokya, sarsti, samipya, sarupya or ekatva -- even though they are offered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT

It is clearly stated herein that a pure devotee does not desire ekatva, oneness with the Supreme Lord, as desired by the impersonalists, the mental speculators and the meditators. To become one with the Supreme Lord is beyond the dream of a pure devotee.

Sometimes he may accept promotion to the Vaikuntha planets to serve the Lord there, but he will never accept merging into the Brahman effulgence, which he considers worse than hellish. Such ekatva, or merging into the effulgence of the Supreme Lord, is called kaivalya, but the happiness derived from kaivalya is considered by the pure devotee to be hellish.

The devotee is so fond of rendering service to the Supreme Lord that the five kinds of liberation are not important to him. If one is engaged in pure transcendental loving service to the Lord, it is understood that he has already achieved the five kinds of liberation.



When a devotee is promoted to the spiritual world, Vaikuntha, he receives four kinds of facilities. One of these is salokya, living on the same planet as the Supreme Personality. The Supreme Person, in His different plenary expansions, lives on innumerable Vaikuntha planets, and the chief planet is Krsnaloka.

Just as within the material universe the chief planet is the sun, in the spiritual world the chief planet is Krsnaloka. From Krsnaloka, the bodily effulgence of Lord Krsna is distributed not only to the spiritual world but to the material world as well; it is covered by matter, however, in the material world. In the spiritual world there are innumerable Vaikuntha planets, and on each one the Lord is the predominating Deity. A devotee can be promoted to one such Vaikuntha planet to live with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

In sarsti liberation the opulence of the devotee is equal to the opulence of the Supreme Lord. Samipya means to be a personal associate of the Supreme Lord. In sarupya liberation the bodily features of the devotee are exactly like those of the Supreme Person but for two or three symptoms found exclusively on the transcendental body of the Lord. Srivatsa, for example, the hair on the chest of the Lord, particularly distinguishes Him from His devotees.

A pure devotee does not accept these five kinds of spiritual existence, even if they are offered, and he certainly does not hanker after material benefits, which are all insignificant in comparison with spiritual benefits. When Prahlada Maharaja was offered some material benefit, he stated: "My Lord, I have seen that my father achieved all kinds of material benefits, and even the demigods were afraid of his opulence, but still, in a second, You have finished his life and all his material prosperity." For a devotee there is no question of desiring any material or spiritual prosperity. He simply aspires to serve the Lord. That is his highest happiness. (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.29.13)

Acintya-bhedabheda tattva

The impersonalist philosophers of the Mayavada school believe that the Supreme and the living entity are the same. Consequently they consider themselves God. However, they say that the cosmic world is a creation of maya, and is therefore false.

This is explained by the statement brahma satyam jagat mithya: ' Brahman (or spirit) is true and the world of matter is false.' The Vaisnava philosophy is acintya-bheda-abheda tattva, which means simultaneously everything is one with Krishna, but it is different. Everything is one because it is all Krishna's energy, therefore, we do not say that matter is false rather we say it is temporary. However, although Krishna's energy is everywhere, Krishna still remains in His personal feature as the independent Source of energy.



Three Energies of Krishna

The primary potencies of the Absolute Truth are mentioned to be three: internal, external and marginal. By the acts of His internal potency, the Personality of Godhead in His original form exhibits the spiritual cosmic manifestations known as the Vaikunthalokas, which exist eternally, even after the destruction of the material cosmic manifestation.

By His marginal potency the Lord expands Himself as living beings who are part of Him, just as the sun distributes its rays in all directions. By His external potency the Lord manifests the material creation, just as the sun with its rays creates fog. The material creation is but a perverse reflection of the eternal Vaikuntha nature.

These three energies of the Absolute Truth are also described in the Visnu Purana, where it is said that the living being is equal in quality to the internal potency, whereas the external potency is indirectly controlled by the chief cause of all causes. Maya, the illusory energy, misleads a living being as fog misleads a pedestrian by blocking off the light of the sun. Although the potency of maya is inferior in quality to the marginal potency, which consists of the living beings, who are part and parcel of the Lord, it nevertheless has the power to control the living beings, just as fog can block the actions of a certain portion of the sun's rays although it cannot cover the sun. The living beings covered by the illusory energy evolve in different species of life, with bodies ranging from that of an insignificant ant to that of Brahma, the constructor of the cosmos.

The pradhana, the chief cause of all causes in the impersonal vision, is none other than the Supreme Lord, whom one can see face to face in the internal potency. He takes the material all-pervasive form by His inconceivable power. Although all three potencies -- namely internal, external and marginal -- are essentially one in the ultimate issue, they are different in action, like electric energy, which can produce both cold and heat under different conditions.

The external and marginal potencies are so called under various conditions, but in the original, internal potencies there are no such conditions, nor is it possible for the conditions of the external potency to exist in the marginal, or vice versa. One who is able to understand the intricacies of all these energies of the Supreme Lord can no longer remain an empiric impersonalist under the influence of a poor fund of knowledge. (Cc. Adi, 2.96)